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September 28, 2015

EPA Updates Standards to Increase Safety and Protect the Health of America's Farmworkers

Revised standards give farmworkers health protections under the law similar to those already afforded to workers in other industries

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced today increased protections for the nation's two million agricultural workers and their families. Each year, thousands of potentially preventable pesticide exposure incidents are reported that lead to sick days, lost wages and medical bills but with changes to the Agricultural Worker Protection Standard the risk of injury or illness resulting from contact with pesticides on farms and in forests, nurseries and greenhouses can be reduced.

"President Obama has called closing gaps of opportunity a defining challenge of our time. Meeting that challenge means ensuring healthy work environments for all Americans, especially those in our nation's vulnerable communities," said EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy. "We depend on farmworkers every day to help put the food we eat on America's dinner tables—and they deserve fair, equitable working standards with strong health and safety protections. With these updates we can protect workers, while at the same time preserve the strong traditions of our family farms and ensure the continued the growth of our agricultural economy."

"No one should ever have to risk their lives for their livelihoods, but far too many workers, especially those who work in agriculture, face conditions that challenge their health and safety every day," said U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas E. Perez. "Workplace illness and injury contribute greatly to economic inequality, and can have a devastating impact on workers and their families. By promoting workplace safety, these provisions will enhance economic security for people struggling to make ends meet and keep more Americans on the job raising the crops that feed the world, and we are proud to support the EPA in this effort."

Here are thoughts from a former farmworker on EPA's revised worker protection standards:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAYGb1-LUH4>

EPA's updates reflect extensive stakeholder involvement from federal and state partners and the agricultural community including farmworkers, farmers and industry. These provisions will help ensure farmworkers nationwide receive annual safety training; that children under the age of 18 are prohibited from handling pesticides; and that workers are aware of the protections they are afforded under today's action and have the tools needed to protect themselves and their families from pesticide exposure.

View the video to learn more about EPA's revised worker protection standards:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0PMYSirxIY>

Listen to the actualities for the revisions to the farmworker protection standards:

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/bd4379a92ceceeac8525735900400c27/b18112371b9d3f8985257ece0057f07a!OpenDocument>

Additionally, EPA is making significant improvements to the training programs including limiting pesticide exposure to farmworker families. By better protecting our agricultural workers, the agency anticipates fewer pesticide exposure

incidents among farmworkers and their family members. Fewer incidents means a healthier workforce and avoiding lost wages, and medical bills.

These revisions will publish in the Federal Register within the next 60 days. For more information on the EPA's Worker Protection Standard:

www2.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/revisions-worker-protection-standard

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